DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 200 544 SP 017 733

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TITLE Self-Formulating Study-Groups: An Innovative Approach to Staff Development in Denmark.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 21p.
AVAILABLE FROM Program Development Assistance System, University of Washington, University District Building #330, 1107 NE 45, Seattle, WA 98105 ($1.00).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Consultants; Foreign Countries; Goal Orientation; Group Discussion; Group Dynamics; Group Experience; Inservice Teacher Education; *Leadership Responsibility; Postsecondary Education; *Problem Solving; Self Determination; *Self Directed Groups; Self Evaluation (Groups); *Staff Development; Teacher Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Denmark

ABSTRACT

Self-formulating study-groups, comprised of teachers voluntarily meeting with consultant leaders, are used in Denmark as an effective tool for identifying and discussing relevant problems and developing action programs. The general educational approach employed in self-formulating study-groups includes a problem orientation related to the practical concerns of daily teaching activities, which combines the concerns of educational philosophy and methods, psychology, and general knowledge about the problem area. This approach attempts to move from theory to practice or from practice to theory. Consultants have the responsibility of developing a theoretical rationale for the group which will enable them to identify the goals of their activity. The results of an evaluation of this approach to staff development in Denmark are analyzed. Particular emphasis is placed on the critical role of the consultant, and the general characteristics of successful consultants are listed. Advice is offered for teachers wishing to form such a group. (JD)

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SELF-FORMULATING STUDY-GROUPS:

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT IN DENMARK

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1980

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

In Denmark study-groups have been employed as an alternative form of education for several years, especially in higher learning institutions (Himmelstrup, 1970). This educational approach has various names and slightly different methods, making it difficult to define a precise and unified process, but two elements are fundamental. First, the starting point for learning must be connected with and oriented to problem areas. Second, the participants must be included in the selection of the problem as well as the subsequent decisions regarding which approach they will take during the process toward understanding, illuminating and/or solving the problem. As an educational form, study-groups theoretically remove much of the traditional idiosyncrasies of conventional education and replace it with participant influence, an open curriculum, and a new role for the instructor or consultant.

Our experience suggests that the general approach of self-formuating study-groups would be suitable for many staff development programs. It can be easily adapted to fit the particular needs of each school. In Denmark it has been used as a means by which practicing school psychologists improved communication between themselves and the teachers in their respective schools. In other cases, special educators and regular teachers combined resources to provide more appropriate education for handicapped students. Other study-groups focused upon school organization problems. Finally, a majority of the teachers used the study-groups as a means to improve teaching strategies and/or curricula within a specific subject area or to examine problems surrounding a particular grade level. But the generic goal across all study-groups was to identify relevant problems and develop action programs related to the particular problems identified by the teachers.

BACKGROUND

Development of the self-formulating study-groups at Danmarks Laererhojskole (DLH) in Aarhus has been a slow but steady process. In many regards they have been influenced by the T-group movement in the United States with strong Lewinian concepts of group dynamics and action research. However, the basic idea and inspiration for this type of further education of teachers is also closely connected with the general reform and development within the Danish public schools. It became increasingly apparent that the traditional courses at DLH were not always meeting the needs and demands of the teachers, especially in connection with the new 1976 Danish school law. At the same time, the pedagogical approach toward adult education was moving in the direction of

participant influence as opposed to teacher direction. These two trends helped shape the educational basis behind the self-formulating groups, as well as the more precise description of intentions as articulated by Pedersen (1976):

1. A desire to bring theory closer to practice by encouraging the participants to start with their own practical-educational relevant problems and to move the meeting place for the course to the schools;

2. A desire to break down the concept of the one-teacher role by breaking down the one-student role and including a group of teachers or entire staff from the same school in a course;

3. A desire to use the direct motivation of the group, by encouraging them to formulate the purpose and subject area for the course;

4. A desire to draw upon the immediate resources within the group, in the subject areas as well as their knowledge about the present educational mileu.

The self-formulating study-groups can be compared to their Danish counterparts, the project-oriented study-groups (Illeris, 1974). Project-oriented study-groups are used on an experimental basis at the University of Roskilde and are similar to self-formulating study-groups in that they must be problem-oriented and participant directed. But the subject area is somewhat narrower for the self-formulating groups, in that the starting point must be directed toward practical pedagogical problems within the school's immediate environment. In this connection it is essential that the beginning phase be one in which the participants can reflect upon and discuss relevant problems which in turn can be restated as goals. The complexity of this process in the context of self-formulating study-groups, has been discussed in several reports (Gaasholt, 1978) and is stressed again because it represents a reoccurring problem in other forms of staff development programs, especially in terms of the role the instructor should maintain.

As mentioned before, participant steering and problem-orientation are two basic and mutually dependent elements within the Danish study-group paradigm, and each of these conditions have immediate repercussions for the person organizing the study-group. It refocuses attention on some very old, but nevertheless fundamental questions regarding the teaching-learning situation and educational reform in general. These questions will be discussed later.

ORGANIZATION OF SELF-FORMULATING STUDY GROUPS

Selection Process

During the fall term each perspective study-group makes a formal application to DLH in Aarhus, describing their focus, intentions, desires and list of participants. After the applications are reviewed each study-group holds a meeting with a staff member from DLH whereby mutual orientation about the new study-form and group expectations are the main business. The application request and the DLH staff members' impressions obtained at the individual meetings with each study-group shape the basis for the final selection.

Consultants

The selected study-groups are then assigned a consultant. The number of consultative hours allotted to each group (from 20 to 100 hours) depends upon the length of the course and special needs of the group.

Approximately twenty consultants have been connected with the study-groups at DLH. Although each study-group has an assigned consultant, there exists the possibility to draw upon the combined resources of other consultants both within and without the large base group of consultants. This exchange process is aided by dividing the central core of consultants into heterogenous sub-groups which meet regularly throughout the year. These meetings provide the consultants with an opportunity to share their group experience, improve their consultative skills, and become better acquainted with each other in order that they may draw upon the combined strengths of the consultant group.

During the first year, the number of consultant hours in a study-group was not to exceed 50% of the total number of hours used by a study-group. This condition has been altered to the extent that the consultants are not assigned a specific set of hours per study-group, but are instead encouraged to independently monitor their consultive time in relationship to the particular needs of a group. The rationale for this is that some groups need more assistance than others. In practice the total number of available consultant hours for the self-formulating study-groups remains fairly consistent, but the distribution of consultant hours per study-group may be quite different from group to group, both in terms of how many hours they have used and when they have used them.

Group Membership

Group membership among the study-groups ranged from a high of 28 members to a low of five members, with a median of 15 members per group. In connection wtih group size, it is interesting to note that the drop-out rate for self-formulating study-groups is relatively high. To date only one group increased its membership, while 10% maintained a zero drop-out rate. On the other hand, 35% of the groups experienced a drop-out rate of nearly 50%, and the remaining groups lost betweeen 25% to 35% of their participants. Although an English study suggests that the drop-out rate for adult education tends to be 25% or over (Rogers, 1974), these

data remain somewhat surprising in light of the fact that the self-formulating study-group members knew or another, had supposedly selected their own goals, (supposely work related), and in many instances the members were receiving reduced teaching hours in order to participate in the study-group activities. All of these conditions should theoretically have reduced the number of dropouts, and therefore this phenomenon is presently under consideration by DLH. One explanation which may have specific significance for drop-out rates in self-formulating study-groups is the distribution of reduced teaching time among participants. A peculiar feature of advance teacher training programs in Denmark is the practice of giving teachers free time from classroom teaching when they participate in official DLH training programs. This practice may be extremely important when considering the high rates of dropouts, because only some teachers participating in the study-groups received reductions in their teaching assignments. There appears to be a connection between drop-out rates for members who had and did not have a reduction in teaching hours. Teachers with reduced time have an obligation to complete the course, whereas voluntary participants -- without an official contract -- may find it easier to drop out if the course is not extremely satisfying to them personally.

Study-Group Report Form

In September 1975 the participating consultants developed a general report form to be used by each study-group. The one page format was extremely simple yet allowed an on-going (continual) and open-ended collection of data. The primary purpose of this information was to facilitate feedback and communication among study-group members, consultants, and DLH. At the same time it provided both subjective and objective information about the processes and activities undertaken by each study-group which would be content-analyzed at a later date. The report was to be made by a group member following each meeting. In most cases the task of writing the report was rotated among members of the study-group. Some direction regarding the type of information to be included was provided. There was space for factual data concerning meeting place and time, presence of the consultant, and the number of members in attendance. Thereafter, space was provided for a discription of the purpose of the meeting as well as the general problem area under consideration. The last section was to allow for more subjective impressions about the progress of the meeting and/or future work.

In order to help the group members focus upon the group processes, which otherwise might have been ignored, some examples were provided in the instructions: (i.e., the members' preceptions of the consultant, and member roles, trust in the group, distribution of work load, steering form, group climate, new goals, group processes, hidden agenda, benefits, alienation, coherent understanding, decision-making processes and decisions made, consequences, literature and practical application).

A majority of the study-groups reported satisfaction with the original form, but several groups, while accepting the general idea, adapted it to include more detailed descriptions of their study-group activities. Generally speaking the reports represented the personal account of the major group activities as recorded by one group member. At the same time this open form of data collection supplied the study-group members with a record of their weekly goals and outcomes, and indirectly provided an opportunity (not always accepted) to reflect upon how things were progressing toward their immediate or long range goals and/or how well the

group was functioning. It also provided the consultant-group with a constant record of group progress and activities. As a research tool it provided us with a rich data base which allowed us to be more attentive to a wider range of variables operating within the groups.

Consultant Report Form

Although less structured, the consultant report form by and large resembled the study-group report form. It had an open-ended format, and listed the same examples for group processes and activities as the study-group form. As expected, the contents of these reports varied considerably. Some contained the consultant's techniques and/or considerations related to group processes, while others offered an overview of discussion topics, and/or general concerns and reflections about other aspects which the consultants deemed important to the development of the study-group. Reports from outside consultants were not required.

GENERAL EDUCATION APPROACH

The general approach employed in self-formulating study-groups includes a problem orientation related to the practical concerns of daily teaching activities, which attempts to combine the concerns of educational philosophy and methods, psychology, and general knowledge about the problem area. It attempts to move from theory to practice or practice to theory. A second important aspect is participant awareness about the immediate learning situation they are experiencing in the study-group. They must focus upon group processes and take responsibility for the climate of the group and the manner in which they operate and use internal resources. Since the consultant can only be present 50%-75% of the time, the participants must accept and share responsibility for both content and group processes. As you may assume, this is not a problem free approach to staff development.

EVALUATION

Since the fall of 1975 an indepth evaluation of the self-formulating study-groups in Aarhus has been in effect. Its dual purpose is 1) to offer this information as feedback to the individual groups and DLH as a means for improving immediate and future programs, and 2) to provide precise and systematic information about the connection between study-group processes and results. A control group consisting of participants from regular DLH courses provided comparative data. The following results are based upon data from questionnaires filled out by each study-group and control-group participant. These data indicate that the four specific goals for the study-groups have been reached at the aggregate level. As expected, study-group work differs from the control group processes, especially during the first three months. In connection with this, study-groups report a higher incidence of frustration during the initial period, a tendenancy to reduce the number of subjects covered during the course, and movement away from theory to practical problems. General improvement of staff cooperation, especially among members of the study-group, was another positive result of the study-groups. Reasons given for the improvement were increased awareness of conflict areas and need for

solutions, while opening new possibilities for solving conflicts (which in most cases were successful). Participants from both educational forms reported a high level of satisfaction, but apparently for different reasons. Satisfaction on the part of study-group participants was due to improved staff cooperation, opportunity to select their own relevant problem-areas as points of departure, and a greater remuneration from their efforts, especially in terms of application of ideas and products in their daily work. In connection with this, there was a greater polarization of opinions. An increased awareness of subject areas was the most frequent explanation for satisfaction as reported by the control-group. Although the results from our study suggest some problems, especially regarding the start phase, consultant roles, and the alienation of some participants, they also allow us to conclude that the original goals of the project are being reached and that it is a promising means of meeting the needs of teachers.

In addition to the mid-term and final data, all consultant and study-group reports have been analyzed. Considerable attention was directed toward varying consultant behaviors across study-groups. These analyses prompted the development of a consultant questionnaire. A few of the results are presented below.

Results From Consultant Questionnaire

As expected, the consultants used variable amounts of time on the study-group. However through an analysis of their responses it was possible to estimate that during the first five months a consultant will

1. make an average of six visits to the study-group,

2. will use an average of three and one half hours for planning and follow-up activities per visit, and

3. will spend an average of 33 hours in consultant meetings.

This is to say that unless structural restrictions are introduced a consultant might be expected to use an average of 54 hours, or nearly eleven hours per month, in addition to the time he/she will participate in the study-group activities.

These data also revealed that being a consultant to study-groups can be frustrating. The source of these feelings was considered to be connected with the re-evaluation process of traditional teaching-learning conditions and roles, while defining new roles and behaviors which are congruent with the ideas behind self-formulating study-groups. Three-fourths of the consultants indicated that they would alter their consultant approach if given the opportunity to start from the beginning. The type of alterations they suggested fall under two distinct categories:

1. the consultant should have an earlier contact with the study-groups, and,

2. the participants should be given better information about the purpose of self-formulating study-group, with regard to content, method, consultant and participants roles, and the participants should be made more aware of the fact that they are responsible for the formulation of the problem/goals, and work approach.

A reoccurring theme at the consultant meetings was the desire to define and clarify the goals of the self-formulating study-groups in more precise terms and set these goals in relation to the consultant role. This reflects a certain degree of uncertainty on the part of the consultants regarding the purpose and approach for self-formulating study-groups. For this study it was important to determine what the consultants considered to be the main purpose, in order to analyze the foci and emphases, in terms of consultant role and study-group activities. Three general themes emerged from the consultant descriptions. First, the study-group activities should have relevance to the participants' own specific school and there should be an attempt at implementing new strategies and approaches within the actual teaching-learning situation. Second, the study-group activities should develop an awareness of the participant's own situation in the group, their teaching situation, and their combined resources as a staff. Third, the study-group activities are a means by which DLH can support and develop new types of teaching forms. The three general descriptions generally support the four goals outlined by DLH, but are more narrow and precise.

Two analyses were concerned with consultant directiveness, their amount of influence, and personal satisfaction as a consultant. A majority (18) of the consultants estimated having exerted "some" amount of direction and/or influence on participant focus. But there was very little agreement between the consultants' estimates of influence and their records of behavior in consultant reports. For example, the consultants with high rates of behavior related to group processes, as recorded in the consultant reports, estimated that they had only some or little influence on group processes. This finding may be interpreted in several ways. First, it adds further evidence in support of a cautious attitude toward the high-risk equals high-learning paradigm. Second, it may mean that these consultants were never able to bring their groups to a satisfying level of functioning. Third, it may simply reflect a careful estimate on the part of the consultant, which may be in part be due to his/her awareness of the expected consultant role. In other words, the consultants' perceptions of their role (i.e., a resource and aid to the groups rather than leader or teacher) may have reduced the possibilities for the consultant to give a correct subjective evaluation of his/her amount of influence. Fourth, part of this discrepency may be due to the methodological problems related to the different types of data under consideration.

The comparision between consultant influence and degree of satisfaction with his/her role is quite interesting and indicates a tentative relationship between the two variables. The consultant registering the greatest satisfaction also reports the highest amount of influence. Likewise, the consultants falling within the middle rages of satisfaction report more modest degrees of influence. And furthermore, the two consultants who were not satisfied with their role as a consultant, report little or no influence on the groups. This suggests that the consultant's estimation of his/her influence, regardless of the actual behaviors or amount of change in the group, will affect the level of satisfaction with being a consultant. Obviously, this could become a problem since the nature of the study-group form, which calls for a modest consultant influence, will reduce the opportunities for the consultant to obtain a feeling of having positive influence on the group--a feeling on which satisfation appears to depend.

In many ways, the advantages of self-formulating study-groups, as described by the consultants, reflect the general goals outlined by DLH. They refer to increased amounts of student responsibility for planning and opportunities to delve into a

subject area, independent problem-solving, and the re-examination of pedagogical principles especially in terms of their own activities.

Generally speaking, the disadvantages appeared to be more in the areas of lack of skill or planning, rather than in fundamental pedagogical problems connected with the self-formulating form of education. The most frequently expressed disadvantage referred to the vague statement of purpose and unstructured nature of the self-formulating program. This was closely related to the consultants' feelings of a lack of technical know-how and security surrounding the consultant role. The consultants also pointed out that it was difficlt to maintain a high level of engagement among the participants, to work on a practical problem and relate it systematically to its theoretical counterpart, and help the group organize a realistic long range plan instead of the short term and often accidental attempts at planning which often was characteristic of the study-groups.

A conservative interpretation of the consultant questionnaire data is that being a consultant for a self-formulating study-group is time-consuming, often frustrating, full of pit-falls but by and large a stimulating and rewarding job.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Self-formulating study-groups are one of the many types of training activities which have been influenced jointly by educational reform strategies and the research findings and general principles derived thereof in social psychology. These implications are taken from an indepth study of the role of the consultant in self-formulating study-groups. The information is useful for a leader because it highlights the sources of opposition and challenge which operate in groups. However, most consultants starting with a new study-group are concerned not so much with the theoretical and empirical aspects of leadership, but with the practical problems of exercising a new and complicated role and assessing how their efforts can be more effective. All too often technique is given priority over ethical considerations. Therefore, an attempt will be made to disclose both ethical and practical considerations for consultants and participants in groups of this type in general and self-formulating study-groups in particular.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The issue of leadership and authority is considered to be fundamental in the hierarchy of concerns about ethnical practices in all groups, be it sensitivity groups, traditional classrooms, or self-formulating study-groups. In light of the present study and other research findings we know that the styles of leadership vary and that philosophical and dynamic assumptions concerning leadership differ from individual to individual. However, one statement can be made without equivocation: The leader is central to the process, irrespective of his/her personal view of leadership. The primary and ultimate responsibility for what occurs in groups is centered on the leader, however reluctantly he/she accepts this role. The very fact of the leader's presence, the act of offering service, places the leader in the position of valuing the activity preferred and bearing the major responsibility for what occurs in the group. The leader is the source of coveted approval, support, security, safety, cognitive stimulation, love, restrictions, limits,

prohibitions and punishments (Hansen et al., 1976). The leader may relinquish this responsibility to the group as a whole or to individuals in the group to a greater or a lesser degree. The leader may be challenged, resisted, seduced, attacked, and even rejected over issues of leadership. But, the leader remains in the center of this focus. Perhaps more than anything else, groups are about leaders.

These observations naturally lead to questions concerning the characteristics, training and ethical responsibilities of group leaders and more specifically consultants of self-formulating study-groups. Are there specific personal characteristics of consultants that can and ought to be identified? What kind of educational training is necessary and desirable for the different types of group experiences? What are the ethical responsibilities of consultants? Universally applicable answers to these questions seem unlikely; nevertheless there are several guidelines related to these questions which I consider valid and worth further debate.

Training

Leaders need to be educated about the particular service they are offering. This fact is brought home quite strongly in this study. The consultants were uncertain of their roles, and they repeatedly requested more guidelines, especially in relationship to the long-range goals identified by DLH. It was obvious that the large portions of enthusiasm demonstrated by these highly competent persons were not enough. Prospective leaders need to be informed about group work as a formal process and need to have the opportunity to evolve a theoretical rationale for practice. No amount of technique will serve as a substitue for a theoretical rationale. Consultants have a responsibility to develop a theoretical rationale for the group practice in self-formulating study-groups, which will enable them to identify the goals of their activity. In effect, this principle endorses the notion that there are both cognitive and experimental aspects to group work practice. Professional practitioners must know "why" they are functioning in specific ways and have specific goals in addition to knowing "how" to provide the experience. This principle is consistent with the idea that "feeling good is NOT enough". Both the affective and cognitive intergration are necessary for effective learning.

Direct and Indirect Consultant Roles

As revealed in the Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1975) study, the leader has both a direct and indirect role: he/she attempts to change members by his/her personal interaction with each individual in the study-group, and he/she has a social engineering function in which the main task is to indirectly contribute to outcome by helping to construct a group which is an effective change agent in itself. The group leader must not only focus on the work done between his/her and other members. Rather, the leader should become more aware of the importance of the role that each member assumes in the group. The consultant must have some methods of appraising the psychosocial situation which must be altered. Some of the consultants who participated in self-formulating study-groups must have been very skilled in this area. But it was not always possible to determine how they made their decisions or evaluations of the psychosocial situation.

Considerable social-psychological research findings suggest that perhaps the first and most important maneuver the leader can take toward assessing the group

situation is to undertake a phenomenological shift: attempt to view the experience from the angle of each of the participants. Another means to inquire into the psychosocial structure of the group is to broaden the definition of feedback so that it includes greater amounts of feedback directed toward the leader--rather than the traditional form of leader to member, or member to member. In other words, the feedback process should also include an avenue from the members to the consultant.

The study-group reports are a first step along this line of reasoning. But too little feedback concerning the group climate and interaction between members and consultant is included in the reports. Therefore, it may be advisable for consultants to have an ongoing assessment of these variables through short written questionnaires or sociometric instruments. Another tactic would be to improve the study-group reports. This may be possible if the consultant made explicit requests to the study-group participants about what kind of information he/she needs to receive in the reports. Certainly the consultant's rationale for such a request should be clarified, and considered necessary.

Group Norms

It appears that leaders are by no means the sole, or perhaps even the most important, source of group norms. Group norms are connected with the expectations that the members and consultants have for their group. It is difficult for consultants to reverse strong expectations members have for the group. In those groups where the consultant and member perceptions of purpose and work approach were in accordance with one another, the amounts of learning and levels of satisfaction were high. Likewise, in those groups where a common starting point and approach was difficult to obtain, there tended to be low-yield reports and less satisfaction.

What implications do these findings have for consultant technique? First, they indicate that the normative structure and psychosocial relations influence group outcome. Furthermore, the leader's role in the formation of group norms is limited. But it is of utmost importance that the consultant assess the group members' expectations about the form and the rules which will operate in their study-group. This may be done either formally (written) or informally (verbally). But if the consultants fail to analyze the members' expectations for the group norms and attempts to introduce opposing norms, the consultants may find themselves in a struggle against some rather potent forces in the group.

Therefore, group and leader norms should be in agreement. But this is not enough. Types of norms make a difference also. Groups in which appropriate behavior was more clearly defined (more norms) and consisted of moderate levels of emotional intensity, moderate confrontation, looser boundaries, and peer control rather than consultant control had the highest yield (Lieberman, et al.). Although our study examined the group norms in an indirect manner, the findings were in total agreement with the above conclusions: first, group and leader norms must be in agreement, and second, specific, explicit, and moderate norms are related to individual satisfaction and group productivity.

Group Goals

The same general statements of caution about group norms can be directed toward group goals. Groups with clear and realistic goals which were in accordance with the consultants' goals could be described as more cohesive, satisfied and productive. In most instances the consultant had assisted the participants re-evaluate their goals from individual and group perspectives, and set them in relation to work approach and group norms. Groups with implicit goals or goals different from what the consultant expected and demanded, were more hostile, negative and dissatisfied with their output.

High-Risk Equals High-Hearing

Stimulation, confrontation and a negative focus need to be balanced. A moderate amount seems optimal; too much causes frustration, dropouts, blockage; and too little leads to apathy and even higher amounts of dropouts. It appears from this study and others that high challenge or high confrontation by the leader is not only unncessary for change, but it is negatively correlated with positive outcome.

Strong criticism, negative judgment or rejection by the leader was received by some members as a very degrading experience. At the same time, the leaders' support and acceptance was of considerable value for some individuals in helping them reassessed their thinking and increase their evaluation of self-worth.

Patience

It is important that consultants do not try to oversell their ideas or themselves in order to bring about their definition of desirable change. Change is hard work. It cannot be forced or demanded. Patience, working-through, and time are essential companions of change. The consultant must have a framework which will help the group experiment, test, readapt and evaluate. These are the components of change and these are the skills which the consultant should be encouraging rather than a particular outcome.

Responsibility

As mentioned many times before, I take the position that the primary and ultimate responsibility for what occurs in groups lies with leaders. Some leaders have argued that they bear no responsibility for what happens to the members of their group. Often contracts are made whereby the leader is released from any assumed responsibility and it is left with each member. I maintain that such a view of the leadership role is misguided and dangerous. It ignores the fact that a leader (even a part-time consultant for a self-formulating study-group) has the greatest importance in the group, not only because of the different status attributed to him/her by the members, but also because he/she objectively is in a unique position to harness, for better or worse, powerful group forces.

At the same time, I realize that a consultant of a self-formulating study-group is placed in a difficult position. He/she cannot always be present and thus may miss some vital opportunities for avoiding problems. Nor is it easy for the consultant to control or guide the group norms and goals in self-formulating study-groups. But,

in the last analysis, the reason the consultant is assigned to a group is because he/she supposedly have a set of skills which can benefit the study-group under the conditions in which they operate. The consultants' acceptance of that implicit assumption is reason enough for them to accept responsibility for the outcome of the study-group.

SUCCESSFUL CONSULTANTS OF SELF-FORMULATING STUDY-GROUPS

Below are suggested some general characteristics of successful consultants of self-formulating study-groups. This list can be treated as a guideline for training programs or for internal discussions among consultants. These aspects have been assembled from personal experience, discussions with consultants and participants in self-formulating study-groups, and from literature concerned with leadership roles and the training of consultants and group leaders.

Willingness to Change

The consultant role is not simple. It requires one to look at oneself in relationship to the group and individual members. It will be necessary to question nearly everything and be willing to accept from others (fellow consultants and study-group participants) that it may be best to take another approach. If the consultant has strong views about how things should be done, and has difficulty in altering opinions, then this type of a consultant role may be difficult.

Be Able to Analyze the Group

A good consultant notices and is aware of happenings in the study-group. It should be possible for the consultant to identify and describe in objective terms to the group what is happening. It will, of course, help if the consultant knows something about group processes as an area in social psychology and is comfortable with concepts in this area. Experience with many different kinds of groups will also be useful.

Guide the Group Toward Self-Analysis

The consultant must be able to comment on group process (see above), make generalizations, raise questions, and generally help the participants think explicity about the particular experiences they are going through. But pointing out these dimensions is NOT enough. In self-formulating study-groups it is especially important that the consultant guide and train the participants in developing these skills. This usually happens through discussions wherein the consultant can make interpretations about what is happening in the group, show the relationship between two different situations, invite the members to analyze the situation, point out that something has happened (a decision is made) and invite a group analysis. Both the pointing out and the subsequent analysis are essential.

Encourage Group Growth

The consultant has to help the study-group participants think and at the same time supply emotional support so the members will be able to join the consultant in taking responsibility for group-analysis. The consultant's basic job is to work him/herself out of a job. This is a difficult concept. A balance must be made between analyzing experiences, making new ones, and on the other hand completely abdicating the responsibilities of leadership by withdrawing or acting like "just another group member".

Consulting is a process of initiating and holding back--saying something or keeping quiet. You may turn questions back to the group, point out successful events, distribute responsibility, encourage group planning, and invite group analysis--all as a different means to encourage and stimulate growth among group participants to take over the leadership responsibilities.

Focus on Two Levels

In self-formulating study-groups the participants are asked to work on two plans--first, the cognitive or subject area which may result in a product, and second, the group processes operating within their group. This requires of the participants to expose their own behavior to analysis, and be willing to change some old patterns. Participants need support to do these things. At the beginning the support will often come from the consultant. Gradually, the support role should be absorbed by the participants. This is an area where group norms take on enormous importance. An open discussion about group norms can help the consultant identify typical support behaviors (reduction of excessive conflict, warm and friendly comments, encouragement and reduction of group tension) and set these in relation to group norms and group goals. In this way the need for support has been legitmatized and at the same time the consultant makes it clear that the group must share the responsibility with him/her in order to avoid overdependence on the consultant.

A Balance of Control

As mentioned several times before, the consultant exerts some control over the group in numerous ways: the suggestions, mode of activities, the times he/she remains silent, and so on. At the same time, the study-group participants hold widely varied feelings about how much control the consultant should have. Thus there are implicit and explicit means of consultant control. Our research study pointed out this dilemma quite clearly--some participants encouraged consultant direction while other members resented nearly all comments and attempts at guidance, to the point that the consultant was for all practical purposes excluded from the group.

Obviously an analysis of these different attitudes regarding degree of control by the consultant can be extremely fruitful in understanding how the participants feel about the problem of leadership. This is especially crucial in self-formulating study-groups. Often self-formulating study-groups are given (or accept) the impression that they are in complete control, and the various interpretations of control can result in severe problems for both consultant and members. At the same time, some consultants exert a great deal of control. Apparently, learning to

use the right amount and kind of control behavior is a matter of practice, reflection and open discussion between consultant and participants.

Develop a Rationale for Group Practice

Ideally each consultant should define his/her own role and develop a theoretical rationale for group practice which will enable him/her to identify goals for activities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of his/her own role and the value of the activities. The consultant can become more aware of the skills required in the consultant job if he/she analyzes the tasks connected with the consultant role in self-formulating study-groups. These skills can become more explicit, be practiced, evaluated and finally set into a theoretical framework which in turn will guide future behavior.

Evaluation

Evaluation goes hand in hand with role identification. It is a process of trying to find out whether certain actions (behavior) have led to desired consequences (what we hoped for or believed would happen). Evaluation is best seen as a continuous process engaged in by the people who are responsible for setting up and carrying out the program. But although evaluation procedures need not be overly rigorous, they should be well planned and systematic. In most instances, consultants and participants will be interested in evaluation for immediate steering purposes (internal decisions) rather than longer-term assessments (external decisions). But both types of evaluation are necessary and many instruments can be used to contribute to each of them. In either case the basic steps in evaluation are: 1) specifying the desired consequences or outcomes of the program, 2) devising ways of measuring the degree to which the goals have been achieved, 3) carrying out the action, 4) collecting the desired information, and 5) making analysis and interpretation of it before planning the next activity.

In the past consultants have been encouraged to evaluate their own approach through writing reports and responding to questionnaires, and through verbal discussions with other consultants. In the future it seems advisable that consultants make a greater commitment to the area of self-evaluation by recording their behavior more systematically. This can be done in many different ways. One of the easiest methods is to use lists of behaviors which can be tallied on the spot. Other useful techniques are analysis of tape recordings and video tapes. Obviously, the latter will give the most complete record of both consultant behavior and the reactions of the participants. Another advantage with video tapes is that they can be analyzed over and over, depending upon the particular problem or purpose of the analysis. This technique has been successfully used both in training programs and, more recently, in connection with the analysis of group interaction processes as found in educational psychology classes (University of Aarhus) using group discussion methods. In the latter example the video tapes have acted as feedback and stimuli for the students. They see their own group behavior and explain or analyze their reactions, which in turn usually leads to the discovery of a new set of problems. The complex process of finding a balance between practice and theory is reduced through this method because the students and teachers are dealing with the practical problems of their group while at the same time attempting to put their present situation into relation with existing social-psychology and pedagogical theory. And there is no lack of motivation. In fact, the students are motivated to

the point that they are willing to continue after the three hour teaching period is over.

Since a majority of the study-groups spend some time on group processes, this method of using video tape as a feedback and analysis system for further development of pedagogical problems appears to hold considerable promise.

Written accounts of the different important aspects of a visit to a study-group can also give valuable insights into the consultant's concept of his/her role and behavior patterns. Another useful but less frequently employed tool in process evaluation which might be considered are semi-structured diaries. (Elklit and Friis, 1978).

Obviously, all of the many different types of evaluation techniques available to consultants have not been covered here. Entire books are devoted to the methodological concerns of evaluation, which the interested consultant may consult. But what is being stressed here, is that evaluation is important and should be improved. The responsibility for the evaluation process must be shared by consultants, participants and the educational institutions. Consultants and participants need to evaluate in order to improve their program. Likewise, the idea of self-formulating study-groups need to be evaluated in order to gain the necessary information about the consequences of this form of advanced training for teachers. Both forms of evaluation are necessary and mutually interwined and important.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

As a member of a self-formulating study-group, it is quite reasonable to expect that you, as a practicing teacher, who will devote perhaps over 100 hours to such an activity. It seems reasonable that you will desire information which will place you in a position where you can help develop the study-group in the manner you and the other members see fit. You can monitor and control your own behavior in the group and even choose to leave it. At the same time, you and your fellow participants have the most at stake. It is your time, your profession, your teaching assumptions and methods, and your students that will be the topics under consideration in the study-group. Therefore, you are in an excellent position for using information from a study like this one. Here is some advice for the consumers.

Before You Apply

Individual goals: Consider carefully what you hope to learn from this experience. In other words, what are your personal objectives for joining a self-formulating study-group?

Group goals: The next step is to compare your objectives with those of the other members. Try to determine if it is reasonable to expect that your objectives can be interwined with the group goals.

DLH goals: Analyze the goals of the self-formulating study-groups as outlined by DLH. Discuss these with other tentative study-group members and the representatives from DLH. Try to find out what the implied consequences of these

goals will have in terms of your study-group. Strive to be explicit and concrete rather than vague and all-inclusive.

Talk to other teachers who have been in self-formulating study-groups: Another sort of useful activity is to talk with past study-group participants. Ideally it should be after the study-group activities have been completed and the participant has had time to reassess the total picture. One of the easiest and most productive questions to pose is simply: "Would you recommend that I join a self-formulating study-group?" You might also want to ask about the consultant, his/her behavior and group strategies, how the consultant was used, the group climate and the purpose of the study-group. The answers can be compared with what you expect to gain from your own study-group. Negative responses should be taken quite seriously. Positive answers should be taken skeptically. In either case try to formulate the "whys" behind the evaluations. If possible, you should try to talk to more than one member of the same study-group.

Evaluation results: You can request information about the evaluation of self-formulating study-groups. How do participants view the contributions of the self-formulating study-groups? How do these compare with teacher evaluations of traditional courses? What are the major problems and/or successes? (see Gaasholt, 1977).

Once the Study-Group is accepted and established. Now the work really begins. You will need to clarify the balance between the consultant and participant established group norms and goals, and devise a reasonable work approach. It will pay to be recurrently aware of one's own position in the group, and to operate, if possible, in ways which demonstrate that you are a comfortably active member of the group. Keep track of your behavior. Ask for feedback. Compare your interaction pattern with the other participants and consultant.

Including your own feelings and interpretations of group interactions in the study-group reports can help the group and consultant take a thoughtful stance toward what is going on in the group and in their own awareness.

Continuous evaluation should be built into your program. This includes spontaneous feedback among members and the consultant, summarizing the major points, and self-analysis of group processes. But more systematic analyses should also be included in your program. Don't be afraid to ask for feedback or to compare your present situation with the end objectives of the study-group. It may be necessary to revise objectives several times during the life of the study-group, but this will be better than setting unrealistic goals which can never be reached. Unrealistic goals produce feelings of frustration, alienation and incompetence and therefore should be avoided at all cost. Continuous evaluation is your insurance that the methods you are using will help the group reach the planned objectives.

After the Study-Group is Over: This period should not have many complications if the study-group has actually reached the planned goals. It may not be so easy if your expectations were different from the outcome. It is important to make a realistic transfer of the study-group learning activities to your daily teaching situation. It appears to be rather important to be reflective, to think about the study-group activities and one's own behavior in relationship to your present teaching situation.

It may be advisable to meet informally with the study-group participants once a month to reassess the study-group activities in terms of daily practice. One can ask the other members to describe how they have been able to adapt study-group activities for their own classroom situation. It is often of utmost importance that you do not let the formal end of the study-group period stop further learning. In fact, it would be wise to discuss follow-up activities with the participants before the study-group activities are completed.

If you are able to incorporate some or all of these suggestions into your work with a self-formulating study-group, the chances for a positive outcome will be very high. In contrast to other types of formal education, the self-formulating study-group offers many more opportunities for the participants to structure the learning process, learn better means of cooperation and use of resources among staff members, and focus on relevant problems. But it also requires that each member take responsibility for making these ideals a reality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The value of all research findings is enhanced through collaboration. Replications, based on an exact duplication of the methods used in this study, with possible increases in the number of reports, would add immeasurably to any confidence or lack of confidence properly placed in this study's results and conclusions.

Another important research possibility would be to explore the difference between consultant and study-group reports in a systematic nature. Video tapes of consultant behavior, covering different periods of the study-group activities, would be not only an excellent data base for indepth analyses of consultant and participant behavioral patterns, but also an excellent training device for present and future consultants.

Research comparing consultant planning and their actual behaviors in the group is also advised. We know very little about how consultant plans affect his/her behavior. Just how useful is the consultant's rationale and plan of action in relationship to group behavior and outcome?

Follow-up studies of the participants of self-formulating study-groups seem quite reasonable and necessary. How do these teachers evaluate their study-group activities after one or two years? How is the cooperation between staff members after several years? Have these teachers been able to integrate the knowledge gained in the study-group into their teaching activities? What should the consultants have done differently? A host of questions await answers.

Along with a general follow-up study, it will be necessary to examine the reasons behind the high rate of dropouts in self-formulating study-groups. Several variables have been mentioned in this report, which may be connected with the drop-out rate. But intensive and rigorous investigations are necessary before we can explain with confidence why so many teachers decide to drop out of this form of further education. An understanding of the reasons is essential for a realistic evaluation of the self-formulating study-group approach.

Finally, how do consultant behaviors differ as a result of the member composition of the study-group? We know that the behavioral patterns for these consultants

were quite stable across time with the same study-group. But does the consultant behavior change as a result of being placed with a different study-group? We know that teacher behavior is stable, yet easily altered by the student composition in the classroom. Thus, it is quite reasonable to expect that consultant behavior will also change as a result of the composition of members in a study-group.

FINAL WORDS

Hopefully this report will contribute to indepth pedagogical discussions concerning the consultant role, self-formulating study-groups and the implications thereof. The philosophical and democratic case for discussion, as well as by implication its educational justification, has been powerfully stated by John Stuart Mill in On Liberty, and can still serve as a model to any pedagog today:

> "There must be discussion, to show how experience is to be interpreted. Wrong opinions and practices gradually yield to fact and argument, but facts and arguments, to produce any effect on the mind, must be brought before it. Very few facts are able to tell their own story, without comments to bring out their meaning. The whole strength and value, then, of human judgment, depending on the one property, that it can be set right when it is wrong, is that reliance can be placed on it only when the means of setting it to right are kept constantly at hand. In the case of any person whose judgment is really deserving of confidence, how has it become so? Because he has kept his mind open to criticism of his opinions and conduct. Because it has been his practice to listen to all that could be said against him, to profit by as much of it as was just, and expound to himself, and upon occasions to others, the fallace of what was fallacious. Because he has felt, that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode, but this, nor is it in the nature of human intellect to become wise in any other manner."

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